

How Can You Enjoy Sound Of Rain Amid Bedlam That'd Drown Niagara?

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12-7-67

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Early last week a cold front moved into the Shortgrass Country, bringing precisely the type of clouds we need more often — grey, low-hanging dandies, so full of water they high-centered on the low hills.

The slow rain from the heavy cloud was welcome as ever, but it went largely unheard. The time has gone when a man can sit around and listen to water dripping off the roof. Our miraculous age has produced so many machines that thunder and lightening haven't much chance of being heard. A timid thunder cloud can come and go without anyone being the wiser.

In the mornings, long before daylight, diesel trucks are roaring on the highways. By the time these smog-spreading monsters have moved out, parents start racing their car motors to get the kids off to school. Then the airways open up. All day and into the night, the exhaust blasts of gasoline and jet engines wreck the peace of the outdoors.

Inside the house the racket is worse. The grinding of automatic washers encourage vacuum cleaners to scream even louder. The whine of home hair-dryers combined with the din of the television set adds to the decibel range of the record player. Electric toasters pop, coffee percolators gurgle and strangle, and dry corn flakes crackle and rustle as if the Pure Food and Drug Act specifically stated that noiseless cereal was against the law.

As if the scene weren't otherwise mad enough, a modern telephone that doesn't ring every four minutes is suspected of being out of order. Screen doors, which have always been formidable noise makers, are considered unfashionable if their slam doesn't match a sonic boom. A sink drain that doesn't gargle and burp like the backwash of a high tide is likely to be classified as unsanitary.

On several occasions I have attempted to convince my little group of eight kids and one wife that this racket can be toned down. But since modern fathers are granted an audience only in matters pertaining to money and retail buying, my efforts to gain the floor have been about as successful as if I were an aquarium owner trying to regulate fishing in the Black Sea.

One evening when only four radios and the dishwasher were in operation (the television set was out of order), I did manage to voice a mild objection to the constant pandemonium. But before I could compete my sermon, a taped recording of the previous Sunday's car races broke out in the back hallway. An opera singer supported by a bull horn couldn't have delivered my message.

Therefore, hearing rain running off the roof is no longer possible.

Doctors say all this racket is bad for our health. They blab about such imponderables as noise thresholds and breaking points, and claims that when everybody gets to where he can't stand another sound, we'll revert to a more peaceful civilization.

Well, for my money, that day has already arrived. As rare as a rain is out here, we need to hear every drop. And if things ever calm down at my house, I plan to advise the other inhabitants of this in the most pointed terms.